

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /059 W

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O R 311545Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6123

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 4163

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, KU

SUBJ: PUBLIC AND PRESS REACTION TO GOK GOVERNMENTAL
CHANGES; SPECULATION ON CABINET

REF: (A) KUWAIT 4143, (B) KUWAIT 4127

1. SUMMARY. KUWAIT HAS BEEN QUIET IN THE WAKE OF AUGUST 29
CONSTITUTIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL CHANGES. PRESS IS EFFECTIVELY
MUZZLED AND ONE PAPER SHUT DOWN FOR A MONTH. TOP LEADERS
HAVE MOVED CALMLY TO REASSURE KEY GROUPS AND PUBLIC AT LARGE,
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AND MOST KUWAITIS APPARENTLY ARE SATISFIED THAT AMIR WAS

JUSTIFIED IN

DISSOLVING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. SPECULATION ON
NEXT CABINET HAMSBEGUN, BUT CABINET MAKEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED.
END SUMMARY.

2. LOOKING BACK AT AUGUST 29 POLITICAL MOVES BY KUWA TI
LEADERS, IT IS CLEAR TO US THAT AMIR AND HIS ADVISORS
ACCURATELY ANTICIPATED THE REACTIONS OF THE KUWAITI PRESS
AND PUBLIC, INCLUDING THE LARGE RESIDENT ALIEN POPULATION.
THOUGH THERE WAS BRIEF ALERT OF SECURITY FORCES AUGUST 29,
THERE WAS NO OUTWARD SIGN OF TENSION IN KUWAIT IN RESPONSE
TO AMIR'S ACTIONS.

3. PRESS REACTION. PRESS CONTINUES TO BE COWED, CARRYING
INTERVIEWS AND EDITORIALS APPROVING AMIRI ORDER DISSOLVING
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND GENERALLY SKIRTING ISSUE OF TOUGH
NEW PRESS LAW AMENDMENT. AS INDICATED REF A, AL WATAN
DAILY NEESPAPER DID NOT APPEAR AUGUST 31; ONE-MONTH BAN ON
THIS PUBLICATION IN EFFECT. PRESS OBVIOUSLY FEELING ITS
WAY IN ITS NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH GOK.

4. CABINET SPECULATION. AUGUST 31 PRESS IS FILLED WITH
SPECULATION ABOUT MAKEUP OF NEW CABINET. WHILE USUAL
"INFORMED SOURCES" ARE REPORTED TO BE MAKING NUMEROUS ANOD
CONFLICTING FORECASTS ABOUT NEW CABINET, THERE ARE A
FEW THREADS OF CONSISTENCY IN INFORMATION WHICH LOCAL
REPORTERS ARE GATHERING. MOST PAPERS CARRY REPORTS
THAT THE KUWAITI CABINET WILL GROW FROM 16 TO PERHAPS 19
OR 20 MINISTERS (ALLOWEC BY SUSPENSION OF ARTICLE 56, PARA 3
OF CONSTITUTION), AS RESULT OF FOLLOWING MOVES:

A. NAMING OF NEW INTERIOR MINISTER TO TAKE OVER THAT MINISTRY
FROM SHAIKH SA'AD, WHO CURRENTLY HAS BOTH INTERIOR AND
DEFENSE PORTFOLIOS. (NAME MOST OFTEN MENTIONED AS NEW
INTERIOR MINISTER IS MISH'AL AHMAD AL JABIR AL SABAH,
CURRENTLY HEAD OF THAT MINISTRY'S INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT/
WHO IS CROWN PLJNCE'S YOUNGER BROTHER AND SON-IN-LAW OF
AMIR.)

B. DIVISION OF CURRENT MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND ISLAMIC
AFFAIRS INTO TWO MINISTRIES.

C. CREATION OF OA MINISTRY FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS.

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D. POSSIBLE CREATION OF MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS.

3. REGARDING PERSONALITIES TO FILL THESE AND OTHER MINISTERIAL
POSITIONS, ALL PRESS SOURCES REPORTEDLY AGREE THAT DEPPRIMIN/
MININFO JABER AL ALI WILL RETAIN HIS POSTS, AND ONE REPORT
SAYS HE MAY ACQUIRE STILL ANOTHER PORTFOLIO. ONE REPORT
ALSO INDICATES THAT DEFMIN/INTMIN SA'AD WILL BECOME
SECOND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER. THERE ARE SEVERAL REPORTS

ALLUDING TO FORTHCOMING SHAKEUP IN FOREIGN MINISTRY, SOME SAYING THAT CURRENT FONMIN WILL BE REPLACED BY SALEM SABAH AL SALEM, AMIR'S SON, WHO CURRDKTLY IS MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOR, AND OTHERS SUGGESTING THAT LATTER WILL SOMEHOW SHARE FOREIGN AFFAIRS RESPONSIBILITY WITH FONMIN. (ONE OF LATTER REPORTS SAYS FONMIN WILL BECOME SPECIAL ADVISOR TO CROWN PRINCE.) OTHER CABINET CHANGES WHICH SOME PRESS REVBRTS PAINT AS PROBABLE ARE EXIT FROM CABINET OF: MINISTER FOR CABINET AFFAIRS HUSSAIN; MINISTER OF EDUCATION MARZOUK; OIL MINISTER AL KAZIMI; AND FINANCE MINISTER ATEEQI, THOUGH THERE IS CONTRAY SPECULATION ON ALL THESE. AMONG POSSIBLE "NEW FACES" IN CABINET, NAME OF JASSIM AL QITAMI HAS EMERGED IN PRESS REPORTS. HE WAS LEFTISH NASSERITE ASSEMBLY-MAN WHO IS FROM LEADING MERCHANT FAMILY.

5. THERE WAS WIDE SPECULATION THAT CROWN PRINCE WOULD NAME CABINET DURING AUGUST 31 RADIO ADDRESS. HOWEVER, CROWN PRINCE'S SPEECH APPARENTLY WAS DESIGNED TO REASSURE PUBLIC THAT GOK REMAINS COMMITTED TO DEMOCRACY AND TO PROTECTION OF KUWAIT AS PEACEFUL COUNTRY. HE PROMISED ENACTMENT OF WIDE RANGE OF LEGISLATION IN INTERESTS OF "SECURITY AND STABILITY," NATIONAL ECONOMY, AND HIGHER STANDARD OF LIVING FOR LIMITED INCOME GROUPS, INCLUDING LAWS WHICH WILL "ORGANIZE PRESS," PROVIDE GREATER SOCIAL BENEFITS, GRANT KUWAITI NATIONALITY TO "THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTE TO SERVICE OF FATHERLAND" ANVSPROVIDE BETTER ACCESS TO GOOD HOUSING. SHARPEST LANGUAGE IN SPEECH WAS RESERVED FOR NATIONAL PRESS, WHICH HE SAID HAD "ABUSED" DEMOCRACY, ALIENATED KUWAIT FROM FRIENDLY COUNTRIES, JEOPARDIZED SECURITY AND STABILITY AND CORRUPTED KUWAITI SOCIETY. HE ALLUDED TO CONFLICT IN LEBANON AND ASSERTED THAT LEBANESE PRESS WAS LARGELY AT FAULT, FOR "INTELLECTUAL TERRORISM" WHICH IT HAD PRACTICED. FINALLY, CROWN PRINCE NOTED THAT KUWAIT

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NOW GOING THROUGH TRANSITIONAL PERIOD WHICH WILL NOT HURT "OUR DEMOCRACY." HE SAID: "THE CONSTITUTION WILL REMAIN."

6. GENERAL PUBLIC REACTION. AS EVIDENCED BY CROWN PRINCE'S SPEECH AUGUST 31, GOK HAS TAKEN SOME PAINS TO EXPLAIN TO PRESS (REF A) AND PUBLIC NATURE AND SCOPE OF AUGUST 29 POLITICAL MOVES. AMIR'S SON, SALEM SABAH AL SALEM (MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOR) MET AUGUST 29 WITH LEADERS OF KUWAITI "POPULAT ORGANIZATION" (PROFESSIONAL AND LABOR GROUPS) TO CONVEY EXPLANATION AND ANSWER QUESTIONS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT LEADERS OF SOME OF THESE GROUPS WERE STUNNED, AS WERE MOST OBSERVERS, BY GOVERNMENT'S SURPRISE MOVES AND THAT SOME ANXIETY WAS EXPRESSED AT THAT MEETING. HOWEVER, THE MAN ON THE STREET IN KUWAIT SEEMS TO HAVE ACCEPTED GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS WITH EMOTIONS RANGING FROM

DISINTEREST TO SATISFACTION. MAJORITY OF KUWAITI ELITE
APPEAR TO BE SATISFIED, EVEN GRATEFUL, THAT TROUBLESOME
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS GONE AND THAT SABAH FAMILY'S TRADITIONAL
LEADERS HAVE SHOWN THEY ARE DECISIVE IN ACTION AND HIGHLY
PROTECTIVE OF KUWAITI POLITICAL TRANQUILITY.
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